

AN
A D D R E S S

TO THE
PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND,

UPON THE
ALARMS THAT HAVE BEEN RAISED

IN REGARD TO

P O P E R Y.

BY

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Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Jo. vii. 24.

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MDCCLXXIX.





ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author would not have been so late in giving his judgment to the public, on the alarm that has been raised about the danger of the protestant religion, if the duties of his office had permitted him to do it sooner. He cannot, however, consider it as being yet too late. The national assembly of this church has not yet interposed. It is not to be doubted that an application from them will be urged at their ensuing meeting. The author is the more solicitous to give his sentiments in this manner, as it will not be in his power to be present. And tho' he spoke his mind freely on the question in the last assembly, matters have proceeded so far since that time, that he could not excuse himself, if he omitted to give this additional and more ample testimony to the world, of his judgment on the whole of this important subject.

He hopes that what he here offers, will be attended to with coolness, and weighed with impartiality. He is influenced by no motive, but the love of truth and religion, and a desire of promoting the honour of this church, and the peace of this country. Intelligent readers will not accuse him of being too favourable to popery. Such, he is afraid, if they suspect him of partiality, will be inclined to think that it is all on the other side. Thus much he will acknowledge, that his abhorrence of the spirit of
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that illiberal superstition, heightens the dislike he has to what bears so striking a resemblance to it, in the spirit now raised in this country.

He has been induced the more readily to take this method of delivering his sentiments, because he is certain he can in this way do greater justice to the argument, and with more effect, than by any assistance it would be in his power to give the cause in the assembly-house. Whatever be the consequence, he will at least have the satisfaction to reflect, that he has done his duty.

INTRODUCTION.

IN all the questions wherein religion and morality are concerned, it becomes christians, especially protestants, to recur, in the first place, to that which they all acknowledge *an infallible* standard, and protestants *the only infallible* standard, of truth and right, THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. I know not any point of conduct, on which a christian, if he will impartially consult them, may not find there the amplest information of his duty. The precepts and the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in particular, as well as the actions and the writings of his apostles, furnish us with materials in abundance, both for forming our principles, and for directing our practice. In the present controversy, may I be allowed to ask, Has that recourse been had by the parties on either side, to this pure fountain of light, which might have been expected? It does not appear that there has. Let our first enquiry then be, What is the mind of the SPIRIT on this subject?

It has been pleaded, that the present dispute in regard to the repeal of certain penal statutes against popery, tho' it be in part, is not wholly of the religious kind; it is in a great measure also a political question. The safety of the constitution, it is said, in church and state, may be affected by the issue. This, in the second place, will deserve our serious consideration, that we may discover not only what truth there is in it, and to what conclusion it would lead, but who the persons are whom it ought chiefly to influence.

It may not prove unprofitable, in the third place, to enquiry briefly what are those expedients which christians, and especially pastors, in a consistency with both the


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spirit and the letter of the gospel, are authorised to employ for repressing error and superstition, and promoting the belief and obedience of the truth?

Such a candid and impartial attention as the importance of the subject requires, to the following attempt at solving these questions, is earnestly requested from every pious reader. The most zealous person, whatever side he has chosen, ought to reflect, that being a man he is fallible, and consequently, that it is possible he may be mistaken in his choice. We have the best authority to affirm, that a man may be *zealously* affected, yet not *well* affected*, may "have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge†". Harken then to the apostle's admonition. "Believe not every spirit", not even your own implicitly, for we often "know not what manner of spirit" we "are" of; but try the spirits, whether they be of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world‡. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them§".

* Gal. iv. 17. † Rom. x. 2. ‡ 1 Jo. iv. 1. § If. viii. 29.



CHAPTER I.

The Doctrine of the Gospel in regard to Persecution, particularly of Persecutors.

THE name of persecutor is justly become so odious, that I know no sect of christians who do not disclaim the character with abhorrence. Even papists will not confess that they persecute. By their own account, they only administer wholesome severities, for recovering those who have swerved from the truth, or, if irreclaimable, for deterring others from following their pernicious courses; for defending themselves against their machinations, and for giving a timely check to the contagion of heresy. These, say they, are purposes the most salutary imaginable. They maintain further, that what is done in support of truth, however cruel it may appear, is not persecution; that those punishments only deserve to be branded with that opprobrious appellation, which are employed in defence of error. But as they themselves are always in the right, they can never be in hazard of inflicting these.

So says the Romanist, and, by saying so, demonstrates, either that he is himself a persecutor on principle, or else, that there is no such thing as persecution on the earth. For what is any man's immediate criterion of truth, but his own opinions, in which it is but too evident, that the most confident are not always the best founded. On this foot, the more opinionative a man is, (which is far from saying, the more wise he is) the more he feels himself entitled to be the scourge of all who think differently from him. Nor is it possible for any man to have another rule here but the strength of his conviction, which, if it entitle one, entitles all equally, Jew, Pagan, Christian, or Mahometan. I do

not know that any beside Roman Catholics barefacedly avow this doctrine, but I should be justly chargeable with gross partiality, did I aver that no sect but theirs act in a way which this hypothesis alone could justify. Other parties do not, with equal arrogance, claim infallibility, but often, with greater inconsistency, they exact such a respect to their decisions, as can be vindicated only on the supposition that they are infallible.

The true definition of persecution is to distress men, or harass them with penalties of any kind, on account of an avowed difference in opinion or religious profession. It makes no material odds whether the distress be inflicted by legal authority, or by the exertion of a power altogether lawless. In the former case the evil is chargeable on the community, in the latter solely on the perpetrators and their abettors. But this difference in regard to the authors, does not alter the nature of the thing. Nor does the greater or less severity of the punishments, make any difference but in degree. It is also proper to observe, that the true subject of either toleration or persecution, is not opinion simply, but opinion professed. To claim to ourselves the merit, that we do not persecute for conscience sake, because we tolerate all the opinions which a man keeps to himself, and never discloses to us, is so exceedingly absurd, that one is at a loss to conceive how a man can be in earnest who advances it *. If that only be persecution which is aimed at secret and concealed opinion, and if opinion revealed be a proper subject of correction by the magistrate, who does not incur thereby the imputation of intolerance, it is evident that our Lord himself was not persecuted, his apostles were not, as little were the primitive

* Short view of the statutes, &c. Rem. iii. "As to persecution for conscience sake, it is in no case allowable. A man may be an atheist, a blasphemer, an idolater, a rebel, a papist, or all in one, if contradictions can exist together, and yet, if he be only so in his heart, and do not disturb others, no human laws should interfere. Our laws against popery never did, and never will interfere in this way. They do not allow persecution even of our persecutors."

mitive christians or the protestants. And who, shall we say, are persecutors by this criterion? This wonderful plea cancels the charge at once against Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, who never wreaked their vengeance against a man's secret sentiments, but always against those which he propagated, or at least professed. Nay if it were possible to devise a plea that could clear papists themselves from the guilt of persecuting, it would be this.

Having said thus much for fixing the meaning of the word, and ascertaining what is properly denominated *persecution*, I shall enquire into its lawfulness, on the principles of christianity. Were I to plead the cause of toleration with Pagans, Mahometans, or deists, I should, for topics of argument, recur directly to the light of reason, and the dictates of conscience; I should examine what the principles of humanity and natural right, suggest on this subject. This is the only common ground on which we could enter the lists together. But as it is solely with christians and protestants that I am concerned in the discussion of this question, I shall, waving all other topics, recur to *sacred writ*, particularly the NEW TESTAMENT, an authority for which we all profess the profoundest veneration. Here we have a full and unerring directory, in all that concerns the discharge of every christian duty, particularly in what regards the propagation and defence of the gospel.

The methods whereby, according to the command of our Lord, his religion was to be propagated, were no other than teaching, and the attractive influence of an exemplary life. "Go," said Christ to his disciples, "and teach all nations †. Preach the gospel to every creature *." And "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven ‖." And when their doctrine should meet with no return but contempt and scorn, they are enjoined only to warn such despisers, by shaking off the dust of their feet, of the spiritual dangers to which they expose

† Mat. xxviii. 19. * Mark xvi. 15. ‖ Mat. v. 16.

expose themselves †. Nay, if men should proceed so far as to return them evil for good, and reward their wholesome instructions with persecution, their orders are, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another §. In general, with regard to the character they are uniformly to maintain, they are commanded to “be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves †.” This last qualification is added to apprize them, that it is solely the wisdom of the serpent, not his venom and his tooth, that they must endeavour to arm themselves with. Indeed, of the whole armour of God to be employed in this warfare, the apostle Paul (if I may so express myself) has given us a catalogue. “Stand therefore,” says he, “having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication, and watching thereunto, with all perseverance and supplication for all saints ||.” Behold the christian’s panoply. But for the use of other arms offensive or defensive, in the battles of faith, I can find no warrant.

But tho’ this suited the infancy of the church, when she was yet feeble and tender; now that she is grown hardier and more robust, is it not reasonable that she should change her plan, and assume, in addressing her adversaries, a bolder note? Is there no permission given by our Lord, to have recourse, when that should happen, to other weapons? Had his disciples no hint of the propriety, or rather necessity of penal statutes, for adding weight to their teaching, for checking the encroachments of error, and chastising the insolence of those who should dare, in the maturity of the church, to controvert her judgment? Not the slightest suggestion of such an alteration. On the contrary, it appears inconsistent with the nature of the church devised by ouraviour,

viour, and modelled by his apostles. Hear himself, in that good confession which he witnessed before Pontius Pilate; "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*." Swords and spears and all such instruments of hostility are suited to the defence of secular and worldly kingdoms. If my kingdom were of this world, *then* would my servants fight. But such weapons are preposterous when employed in support of a dispensation quite spiritual and heavenly. In regard to the order is, "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword ||."

The maxims of the apostles we find entirely conformable to the lessons they had received from their Lord. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," says Paul, "we persuade men †." Our only method is persuasion, not compulsion. The only terrors we set before men, are not the terrors either of the magistrate or of the mob, they are the terrors of the Lord, the dread of incurring the divine displeasure, and the tremendous judgment of the world to come; as, on the other hand, the only allurements are the divine promises. "Tho' we walk in the flesh," says the same apostle, "we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thro' God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ †." Are these spiritual weapons now so blunted, that without the coarse implements supplied by human laws, they would be of no utility? In regard to gainfayers and adversaries, we are taught, that as "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient," so he is in particular to "instruct in meekness those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance

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* Jo. xviii. 36. || Mat. xxvi. 52. † 2 Cor. v. 11. † — x. 3, &c.

"ance to the acknowledging of the truth §." Meekly and patiently to teach, is the duty of the minister; the effect of this teaching, that is, the conversion of the sinner, or the conviction of the erring, must be left to the supreme disposer of events. The very utmost enjoined christians in regard to the obstinate and irreclaimable, is, after repeated unsuccessful attempts and admonitions, to avoid their company*.

The disciple ought doubtless to be formed on the amiable pattern exhibited by his master, whose character it was, as delineated by the prophet, that he would not contend nor raise a clamour, nor make his voice be heard in the streets, that he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax †; who was not less eminent for all the mild and gentle virtues, humility, condescension, candour, humanity, and benignity, than for those which excite higher admiration, patience, firmness, fortitude, purity and justice, not to mention the most comprehensive benevolence or love. So remarkably did those shine forth in all the ordinary occurrences of his life, and so deep seems the impression to have been that they generally made, that Paul alludes to this feature in our Lord's character as to a thing universally known and felt, and even recurs to it as a form of obtesting, the more effectually to engage attention and persuade. "Now I Paul myself," says he, "beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of "Christ ‡." These are the qualities by which he himself from the beginning attracted the notice of the people. "I "am meek and lowly in heart §." His discourses were not more energetic than they were gracious. They breathed humanity and kindness to a degree that astonished all. The graciousness no less than the authority with which he spoke excited universal admiration ¶. In short, the fellow-feeling he had of our infirmities, his patience and forbearance towards the refractory, his compassion of the ignorant, and even of them that were out of the way,

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§ 2 Tim. ii. 24. * Tit. iii. 10. † Is. xlii. 2, 3. ‡ 2 Cor. x. 1. § Mat. xi. 29. ¶ Lu. iv. 22. Mat. vii. 28, 29.

were, more than his miracles, the instruments by which the thickest spiritual darkness was dispelled, the most inveterate prejudices surmounted, the hearts even of the most reluctant won, and the world subdued to the obedience of the faith.

Is it not most natural to think, that a cause will be best supported by the same means by which it was founded, and by which it received its first footing in the earth? Ought there not to appear in the servant some portion, some traces of the spirit of the master? To the dispensation of the gospel, which is the dispensation of grace, mercy, and peace, ought there not to be a suitableness in the methods employed to promote it? Shall we then think of any expedient for defending the cause of Christ, different from those which he himself and his apostles so successfully employed? Nay, it were well, if all that could be said were, that we employ different measures from those employed by them. Some of ours, I am afraid, on examination, will be found to be the reverse of theirs. Christ engaged by being lovely, we would constrain by being frightful. The former conquers the heart, the latter at most but forces an external and hypocritical compliance, a thing hateful to God, and dishonourable to the cause of his Son.

But, say our opponents in this argument, popery is a superstition so baneful as not to deserve any favour, especially at the hands of protestants. Its intolerance to them, and persecuting spirit, if there were nothing else we had to accuse it of, would be sufficient to justify the severest treatment we could give it. This treatment to papists could not be called persecution, but just retaliation, or the necessary means of preventing perdition to ourselves. I do not say that either popery or papists deserve favour from us. On the contrary, I admit the truth of the charge against them, but not the consequence ye would draw from it. Let popery be as black as ye will. Call it Belzebub, if ye please. It is not by Belzebub that I am for casting out Belzebub, but by the spirit of God. We exclaim against popery, and in exclaiming against it, we betray but too manifestly, that we have imbibed of the character for

which we detest it. In the most unlovely spirit of popery, and with the unhallowed arms of popery, we would fight against popery. It is not by such weapons that God hath promised to consume *the man of sin*, but it is by *the breath of his mouth*, that is, *his word**. As for us, tho' we be often loud enough in our pretensions to faith, our faith is not in his word. We have no faith now in weapons invincible and impalpable. Fire and steel suit us a great deal better. Christians in ancient times confided in the divine promises; we in these days confide in acts of parliament. They trusted to the sword of the spirit, for the defence of truth and the defeat of error; we trust to the sword of the magistrate. God's promises do well enough, when the legislature is their surety. But if ye destroy the hedges and the bulwarks which the laws have raised, we shall cry, with Israel in the days of Ezekiel, "Behold, our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts †." There is no more security for the true religion. Protestantism is gone! all is lost! We shall all be papists presently. Shall we never reflect on the denunciation of the prophet, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Let me tell those people so distrustful in God's providence and promises, and so confident in the arm of flesh, that the true religion never flourished so much, never spread so rapidly, as when, instead of persecuting, it was persecuted, instead of obtaining support from human sanctions, it had all the terrors of the magistrate and of the laws armed against it. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy; are we stronger than he? ¶"

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* 2 Thess. ii. 8. In our translation it is *the spirit of his mouth*. The original term signifies, *breath, wind, spirit*. When it is connected with mouth, lips, or nostrils, as in this passage, it ought to be rendered *breath*. There is doubtless an allusion to Hos. vi. 5. "I have slain them by the words of my mouth."

† Ez. xxxvii. 11. § Jer. xvii. 5. || Cor. x. 22.

Ye say, 'popery deserves no favour;' but are the deserts of others, the rule of our conduct towards them? Does the institution of Christ command, or even permit us to retaliate the injuries of others? Is the great rule which he hath given us, as containing the sum of the law and the prophets, 'Whatsoever ye find that others do unto you, do ye also so unto them?' Is it, 'Remember to render good for good, and evil for evil to every man?' Hath our Lord adopted the adage of the pharisees, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy?' Hath he said, 'Bless them that bless you, and curse them that curse you; and for them that spitefully use you and persecute you, be sure that, when ye have it in your power, ye spitefully use and persecute them in return?' If this be the language of Christ, I have done; my reasoning is at an end, and I have totally mistaken the matter. But if, in every article, it is opposite, if that authority which ought ever to be held by christians, of all authorities the most venerable, hath enjoined, not 'Whatsoever men do,' but, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,"* if the law of retaliation which says *Eye for eye and tooth for tooth* is expressly set aside, † and his commandment is, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. §" If these, I say, are the dictates of Christ, how indecent, not to give it a worse name, must any argument appear in the mouth of a christian, which subverts the fundamental maxims of the master he professes to serve. Not to mention, that there is real injustice in retaliation on sects and parties, when they are not the same individuals on whom we retaliate with those who committed the cruelties complained of. Popery is doubtless a most intolerant religion, yet it would be both unchristian and unjust to deny that there are many papists who

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* Mat. vii. 12. † Mat. v. 38, &c. § — 44.

would not persecute. Protestantism, from its radical principles, is much more tolerant: it would, notwithstanding, be most uncandid, rather indeed contemptibly partial, to affirm, that protestants have never persecuted.

I am not ignorant that there are christian commentators, who, by their glosses, elude the force of the plainest precepts of our Lord, much in the way the Jewish rabbis invalidated the commandments of God. 'Christ,' say such, 'does not mean in those expressions, the enemies of our nation, much less the enemies of our faith; it is only personal enemies he is speaking of.' That all sorts of enemies are included, there is not a shadow of ground to doubt. But that he had much more an eye to the enemies of our religion than either to national or to personal foes, will be evident to those who attentively consider the scope of this divine discourse. The very kinds of injuries specified, are those he had expressly told them, they would be made to suffer for his name's sake. And one principal view of those sublime instructions is plainly to fortify their minds, and prepare them for bearing properly, what they must soon expect to meet with, purely on account of religion.

But the precepts of our Lord are best illustrated by his example. It may therefore be worth while to examine in what manner he was affected with regard to the antipathy and mutual rancour that subsisted in his time between the Jews and the Samaritans. These stood on a footing with each other somewhat similar (but incomparably worse) to that of protestants and papists amongst us, before the late alarms. As to the principles on which they differed, Jesus explicitly declared for his countrymen the Jews. "Ye worship, ye know not what," said he to the woman of Samaria, "we know what we worship, for "salvation is of the Jews*." Did he therefore adopt the passions of his countrymen? Did he betray the smallest particle of the malignity with which they were inflamed towards a people whose schism and distinguishing tenets he

* Jo. iv. 22.

he was as ready to condemn as they? Let his conduct, on the occasion referred to, serve for an answer to the question. He entered freely into conversation with the woman, and did not disdain to ask her, tho' a Samaritan, to supply him with a little water. This (however small a matter it may appear to us) exceedingly surprised her, knowing the inhospitable maxims to which both parties, but especially the Jews, so rigidly adhered. Nor did his condescension and affability more surprise this stranger, than they did his own disciples on their return, who marvelled that he talked with the woman. Probably nothing less than the very great respect they entertained for their master, hindered them from being scandalized at his moderation, which in any other person they would have denominated lukewarmness in the cause of religion, and want of zeal against the enemies of God's people. Ye know what followed. He stayed with them two days, and made many converts.

Nor was this the only occasion he took of showing his disapprobation of the intemperate zeal of his countrymen, in regard to that people. A lawyer once, to try him, asked, "Who is my neighbour*?" Our blessed Lord, knowing the corrupt explanations on this head, current among the Jews, especially among those of this man's profession, knowing also that a direct answer could serve only to awaken cavil and contradiction; did, in order to surmount his prejudices, address himself, as was usual with him on all moral questions, directly to the heart. Ye have his answer in the well-known parable of the traveller who fell among thieves, and who, tho' a Jew, was overlooked by a priest and a Levite his countrymen, and relieved by a Samaritan. The intention, which shines forth conspicuously throughout the whole, was to stigmatize in the strongest manner that unrelenting bigotry, that inhuman intolerance, which, thro' the wonderful influence of self-deceit, both parties cherished in themselves, under the notion of zeal for God and love to their country; it was to mollify their minds towards each other, and bring them
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* Lu. x. 29. &c.

to admit a reciprocal affection producing an interchange of good offices. If the parable had represented the sympathy as exercised by a tender-hearted Jew towards a suffering Samaritan, his purpose had been frustrated. The proud pharisee, untouched by the misfortunes of people he abhorred, would have remonstrated that his countryman, instead of acting laudably, in assisting one whom he would denominate an adversary of God, had acted shamefully and weakly, in allowing the nobler principles of zeal and patriotism, to be overcome by womanish pity. But its being represented as exercised by a Samaritan to a Jew, gave a different aspect to the whole. It laid open at once the dignity and humanity of the action. It was impossible to withhold approbation. The approved, nay admired generosity of an enemy was too strong an argument to approve the like generous conduct on the other side, for one who could make any pretensions to reason and justice, to resist. Our Lord, after relating the parable, appeals to the lawyer himself, for the answer to his own question. "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Act thyself the worthy part which thou canst not but commend in another. Think every man thy neighbour, and entitled to the offices of charity and humanity, who stands in need of thy assistance. Let no personal feud, no national enmity, no opposition of religion, prove an obstruction to the exercise of the godlike principle of love. Surely then we are not at liberty to do evil to those to whom we are commanded to do good.

On another occasion, after cleansing ten lepers, it did not escape our Lord's observation, nor did he fail to make it be remarked by others, that the only grateful person who returned to give God thanks, was a Samaritan †, a sure evidence, that it is not always just to conclude the badness of mens disposition or practice from the falsity of some of their

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† Lu. xvii. 16. &c.

religious tenets. This single heterodox sectary had more piety and gratitude than the nine more orthodox Jews. In general it deserves to be remarked, that the zeal of our blessed master, far from leading him to inflame the minds of the populace against those who maintained erroneous doctrines in religion, influenced him, on the contrary, to moderate their heat, and bring them to make every candid allowance for differences, even gross corruptions in principle; which, from whatever guilty causes they originated, might be, in those who then entertained them, the natural effects of accidental circumstances.

A pharisee of those days, a very zealous sect, tho' their zeal was of a different complexion from our Lord's, a fast friend, in his own account, to the Jewish interest and religion, might have plausibly exclaimed against this lukewarmness, as he would have termed it. 'Would this teacher persuade us,' might such a one say, 'to forget the days of our forefathers, and the sufferings they endured from the hands of Samaritans? Can we without uneasiness for ourselves, receive these instruments of cruelty into favour? Are we altogether unconcerned for what may be the fate of generations yet unborn? Ought we ever to forget what trouble they gave to our ancestors in the days of Cyrus, how they exerted themselves to the utmost, to frustrate their pious purpose of rebuilding the house of the Lord? † Is this a subject on which we can be silent? Must we overlook all their malicious and insidious attempts against our nation, the calumnies they wrote to Artaxerxes, representing us as irreconcilable enemies and rebels, in order to incense that monarch against us, and excite him to exterminate us from the face of the earth? Can we ever cease to remember their insults, their ambushes, and their plots to massacre our progenitors, who were reduced to the greatest distress thro' their malice, insomuch that our builders were under the hard necessity of working in the work of God's house with one hand, whilst they held a weapon for the defence of their lives with the other,

other, and durst not, for fear of being surpris'd; put off this clothes day or night? † Shall all their treacherous schemes to circumvent us be for ever obliterated, their hypocritical professions, their lying rumours, their hireling prophets? || This is but a specimen of the materials for invective which this subject would have afforded to the zealous of those days. For many other such accusations, undeniably true, might have been brought from the later parts also of their history. From all which they might have exclaimed, much in the strain of some late publications, and with equal plausibility and justice, 'Is it come to this? Are we so degenerate, as to be persuaded by any man to destroy the fences of our religion, to break down our barriers, and hug Samaritans in our bosom, to put these enemies of God and man on the same footing with our brethren and countrymen, and to love them as our friends and neighbours? The days have been when Jews did not need any warning of this kind.'

It is but too manifest that at the very time that our Saviour sought to cure his kinsmen the Jews, of that bitter ungodly zeal with which they were affected to the Samaritans, the latter had not abated a tittle of their ancient bigotry against the Jews. In proof of this, witness the treatment which Christ himself received from them, when passing thro' their country in his way to Jerusalem, near the time of the passover. † "When the time was come," says the sacred historian, "that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face; and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him." Probably no Jew but himself would, particularly on this occasion, have chosen to be their guest. But his condescension and liberality of mind were ill understood by that bigotted race, and worse requited. "They did not receive him; because his face was as tho' he would go to Jerusalem." They would not so much as suffer him to come under their roof. Their reason was; He was going

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to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover. This was matter of high offence. One great article of dispute between the two nations, was whether Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen as the seat of his temple, where sacrifice should be offered and the festivals kept, or mount Gerizzim in Samaria. His going at this time to the Jewish capital, showed plainly his opinion on the controverted point. This opposition to their judgment their pride could not brook. In all fiery zeal, if men would but be impartial with themselves, they would find a greater share of pride at bottom, than they are willing either to perceive or acknowledge. "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" Ah! How much did they still retain not only of the prejudices, but of the furious zeal of the pharisees! How little had they imbibed of the amiable disposition of their master! Nothing so like a bigot of one side as a bigot of the other. Tho' they hate one another mortally, they are, in the internal frame of their mind, essentially the same. Their differences are in comparison merely circumstantial and external. If the unreasonableness and bad temper of one side, could justify the unreasonableness and bad temper of the opposite, this outrageous zeal of the two disciples would make that of the Samaritans appear very moderate. "But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the son of man is not come to destroy mens lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

This rebuke given to two apostles should, methinks, make men a little more modest in regard to their zealous fervours, lest they also be found, on examination, totally to mistake the spirit they are of. Pride, which can tolerate neither opposition nor contradiction, which takes fire at every affront, real or imagined, particularly an affront offered to the understanding, by an avowed difference of judgment, and that resentment which is the natural offspring of pride, are but too apt to screen their deformity under the decent garb of zeal. This rebuke, however, serves to teach us

that the destructive zeal neither partakes of the spirit of our master, nor is adapted to promote the end of his coming. Pure and holy and harmless was that zeal, that heavenly flame by which he was actuated. Like that which Moses saw in the bush *, it burned, but consumed nothing. "They went to another village," says the evangelist. He pocketed this public affront, as the men of the world would say, and meanly left the insult unrevenge. Had the Samaritans deserved this lenity and indulgence at his hands, or at the hands of the Jewish nation? Far from it. But his enquiry was not, what *they* deserved, but what it became *him* to do, what suited the cause of piety, humanity and universal love in which he was engaged. The question, "Have they deserved this favour?" used in the way it has been of late, favours very little of the disciple of him who said, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others?" ||

It is remarkable, that among the many slanders cast upon our Lord by his enemies, one of them was that he was a Samaritan. Calumny, an insidious liar, seeks always, in order to gain credit to her lies, to give them some sort of connection with truth; for this renders them more efficacious in imposing on the rabble. Somewhat of this artifice appears in all the aspersions thrown upon our Lord. It was then impossible that from such a people, his open disapprobation of the virulence with which they spoke of Samaritans, and the inhumanity which they harboured in their hearts against them, should not draw upon him that ignominious epithet. And if things proceed but a little longer with us, in the train they have been in of late, may we not expect to see every man of moderation amongst us, who values a conformity to the spirit and precepts of his master, more highly than the blind applause of the deluded multitude, branded as a papist, or at least a friend to popery?

Some have proceeded so far, as was lately observed by an honourable

* Ex. iii. 8.

|| Mat. v. 46, 47.

honourable gentleman in the House of Commons, to publish inflammatory pamphlets recommending the dissolution of all the bonds of society with papists. The author seems to have taken the Jewish treatment of the Samaritans; which our Lord so plainly reprobates, for his model. I freely own, my model is the reverse of his. It is the disposition and sentiments of Jesus Christ. I am glad to find that those who have assumed the title of *Friends of the Protestant Interest*, (however much I disapprove their conduct in other respects) have, with marks of disapprobation, disclaimed the unchristian performance. In regard to the writer, my first and most earnest wish is, that, by the blessing of God, he may arrive at the knowledge of christianity, and become a christian himself; for hitherto his knowledge has gone no deeper than the surface. And if that wish cannot be obtained, my second is, that he may no longer dishonour the name of Protestant, if he bear that name, but turn papist altogether, of which he is more than two thirds already, and these two thirds not the most amiable part of the character.

But to return; if, with respect to retaliation, such were the maxims of our Lord Jesus Christ, as has been represented, and such was the pattern given by him, can we who profess to be his disciples, imagine that these ought to have no influence in determining our conduct? Had the apostle Peter any meaning, or were they mere words of course that he used in telling us, that we are specially called to the imitation of Christ, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously?" * Was it meant to serve for a lesson to us, or as a vain boast of his own virtue, and that of his fellow-apostles, that Paul exclaimed, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat. † But perhaps they did so, because they were *then* weak, and could do nothing better. They could not *then* retaliate in so effectual a manner as to answer their purpose, and therefore thought it prudent

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* 1 Pet. ii. 21. &c. † 1 Cor. iv. 13.

prudent to submit, and make the best of the circumstances which they could not remedy. I have heard that some popish casuists, when pushed by adversaries who contrasted their methods of propagating the faith with those of the apostles, have replied in this manner : but I should be sorry to think that any protestant were capable of adopting a casuistry which tarnishes, or rather annihilates, the most shining virtues of the saints and martyrs of Jesus, and renders their example of little or no significancy to us.

Thus, I hope, it has been made sufficiently evident that neither the example nor the precepts either of Christ the divine author of the evangelical institution, or of his apostles, authorise the use of the sword or any such carnal weapons for the advancement of religion ; that they fortify our minds with meekness, faith, and patience to bear, but in no case permit us to inflict, persecution, not even in requital of that which we ourselves have formerly been made to suffer ; that the necessary consequence of such unsanctified measures is to subvert the *power*, for the sake of establishing the *form*, of godliness, and to make us sacrifice the *spirit* of our religion, that charity which animates the whole, to a mere lifeless *figure*.

XX

CHAPTER II.

The Conclusions to which sound Policy would lead us, in regard to the Toleration of Papists.

AS to the propriety, considered in a political light, of giving such a toleration to papists in Scotland, as has been already granted in England and Ireland, I must observe, in the first place, that this is a point, the decision of which belongs properly to the legislature. To me it appears particularly improper in ecclesiastical judicatories to meddle with it. It is a question solely regarding the safety of the body politic. If the constitution will not be endangered

gered by such a measure, the principles of reason, and consequently of sound policy, and also the principles of christianity, as has been shown, lead us to conclude that it ought to be adopted; otherwise, not. Now the question in regard to the danger of the constitution is surely of the department of the estates of the kingdom assembled in parliament. And tho' every little borough-corporation, parish meeting, society of artificers and others, corporate and not corporate, weavers, coblers, porters, &c. &c. presume that they are wise enough to direct the King, Lords, and Commons, and that they themselves understand better what concerns the interest, security and government of the nation; this absurd conduct cannot hurt such societies. They have no reputation to lose. Great allowances ought to be made, and will be made by superiors, for their folly and ignorance. But would it become the supreme judicatory, and representative of this national church, in imitation of such examples; to step out of their line, and without the most urgent necessity, to obtrude upon the legislative body, their advice unasked? Nothing in my opinion would more effectually lessen the dignity of that venerable court. There is but one case in which I conceive there would be any propriety in such a measure; and of this I shall take notice afterwards.

But some will object, ' Why do you talk of going beyond our line? Are not our ecclesiastical assemblies the natural guardians of our religion? Who then so proper as they to give warning of the danger, and to use the precautions which ought to be employed, in order to prevent it or ward it off?' I do not know precisely what meaning ye affix to the word *guardians*; but in one sense I certainly admit that both our pastors and our ecclesiastical judicatories are guardians in their several spheres. But this implies no more than that, when they apprehend danger, they ought to double their diligence in using the spiritual weapons above taken notice of, which the gospel supplies them with, for defending the people against seduction of every kind; and that, if there has been any remissness in discharging the ministerial duties in time past, there may be more vigilance and greater exertions in time to come.

But

But their guardianship, I imagine, never extended so far as to entitle them, from any fancied necessity, to counteract the very spirit of their religion, and, for their master's service, to oppose alike his precepts and example. Yet such is manifestly the nature of that recourse to the secular arm, so strenuously argued for by some; a recourse which originated among papists, and would have been left with papists, if protestants had been in all respects consistent with themselves*.

But however improper it may be in our judicatories, as such, to interfere with the legislature in this affair, we may be permitted as individuals in this land of liberty, for the sake of quieting the minds of well-meaning people, freely to canvass the question of the expediency of the projected toleration. This is the privilege, if used discreetly, of all British subjects, in regard to public measures. I shall therefore, with all due deference to my superiors, submit my sentiments on this head to the candid examination of the reader.

It has been said, and very justly, that in every state, as in every individual, there is a right of self-preservation, which implies amongst other things, that of protecting itself against violence offered, either from without, or from within, from foreign hostile states, or from its own seditious and corrupt members, and consequently of repelling force by force. It has been urged further, that it is the duty of the magistrate, who is the trustee, and consequently the servant, of the state, not only to defend the community when attacked, but to watch for its safety; and, by every just method which the constitution empowers him to use, that is, as far as his trust extends, to prevent every danger which may be foreseen, as well as to remove that which is present. Both positions are in my opinion undeniable.

* Short view, Rem. iii. "The very name of religious toleration is justly dear to every protestant." He must be very shallow who does not perceive that with such protestants as these writers, it is then only *the name* that is dear. "The idea of persecution for conscience sake is most odious and detestable."

Qu. Have they expected to be read by none but fools?

Now on these, and on these only, is founded the magistrate's title to interfere with religious sects. Opinion is naturally beyond the jurisdiction of magistracy, whose proper object is public peace or national prosperity. As this cannot be injured or interrupted by men otherwise than by their actions, these are strictly all that are immediately cognizable by civil judicatories. As however it is unquestionable, that opinion has great influence on practice, so the open profession of such opinions as are manifestly subversive of the natural or civil rights of the society, or of the rights of individual members of the society, is undoubtedly to be regarded as an overt act which falls under the cognizance of the magistrate. It is only in this view that opinion ought ever to be held as coming under his jurisdiction. Considered in a religious view, as true or false, orthodox or heterodox, and consequently as affecting our spiritual and eternal interests, it is certainly not of the department of the secular powers. Yet this distinction has not always been observed. And those in power, from considerations of a spiritual nature, which were totally without their province, have thought themselves bound, by the most sacred ties, to do all they could, for the encouragement of their own opinions, because supposed to be sound, and for the suppression of every opinion as unsound, which stood opposed to them.

Hence that spirit of intolerance which has for many centuries proved the bane of Christendom, and which still continues the bane of many countries in Europe, as well as in other quarters of the globe. Nothing can be more evident, than that if the magistrate is entitled, nay obliged, by all the weight of his authority, to crush opinions, merely because erroneous, and conceived by him pernicious to the soul, this obligation must be inherent in the office of magistracy, and consequently incumbent on every magistrate. Now, as his only immediate rule for what he is bound to cherish, and what to crush, is, and can be no other than, his own opinions, and (the magistrate having no more claim than private persons to infallible direction) as the same variety of sentiments may be, nay in different
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ages and nations has been, in those of this rank as in those of any other; it will be found, on this hypothesis, the duty of rulers to suppress and persecute in one country, and at one period, what it is the duty of rulers in another country, or even in the same country, at another period, to cherish and protect. This consequence, how absurd soever, is fairly deducible from the aforesaid principle, and ought therefore to be held a sufficient demonstration of the absurdity of that principle. One of the many unhappy consequences which has flowed from the iniquitous but general practice of acting in conformity to that false tenet, is, that the minds of parties, even those whose differences in opinion are merely speculative, and could never, if left to themselves, have affected the peace of society, have been exasperated against one another. Jealousy and envy have arisen, and been fostered by mutual injuries. Every sect has been led to view in every other a rival and an enemy, a party from which, if raised to power, it would have every thing to dread. And as this almost equally affects both sides, each has played the tyrant in its turn. As mens conduct is influenced more by passion than by cool reflection, all have been very slow in discovering the falsity of the principle, the magistrate's right of interfering, when there is no visible danger to the state; this right, tho' sometimes controverted by the weaker party, the prevalent sect has always affirmed and defended, thinking itself entitled to a monopoly of the principle, as being alone, in its own account, on the side of truth. The remembrance too of injuries received, instead of opening their eyes, and showing them the ruinous consequences of that radical error, has but served to rivet them in it, and make them avail themselves of it in their turn. Nay, so inconsistent a creature is man! Those who but a little before strenuously maintained the right of private judgment, are no sooner raised to power, than they obstinately refuse that right to others. As they have been accustomed to look on the other party as enemies, and have been badly treated by them, they think they derive hence an additional right to persecute them from the law of retaliation.

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This, I acknowledge, renders religious sects in another view, an object of attention to the magistrate. A party whose avowed principles, considered by themselves, have nothing hostile to society, may, from its strength and habitual enmity to the predominant sect, endanger the public peace. Hence it may happen, that civil governours, tho' perfectly indifferent which of two sects they shall favour, may find it incompatible with the safety of the state, to give equal countenance to both: Perfect equality, where there is reciprocal hatred, could not long subsist, without giving rise to reciprocal hostilities. The utmost vigilance could not always prevent this effect, which might, in the end, overturn the constitution. But where the public tranquillity has been long the sole object of the magistrate, there is hardly any risk of his adopting those measures which cause mens minds to rankle, and produces in their breasts that most unlovely and unchristian disposition one towards another.

It is admitted, that when the public peace is in danger, it is his duty to interpose. Sedition or rebellion is not entitled to take shelter in religious sentiments, nor can the plea of liberty of conscience justly avail any man, for invading the liberty or property, sacred or civil, of another. So much for what appears to be the original rights of the civil power in what concerns sects in religion. It must be owned, however, that there are many particular circumstances, which, when they occur, ought, in a great measure, to restrain the exertion of a power otherwise warrantable. When parties are already formed, and of long continuance, tho' their fundamental principles be unfriendly to the rights of society, their numbers, and weight, and other considerations, may render an indulgence, otherwise unmerited, the more eligible measure, because in its consequences the less evil. It may however be remarked in passing, that tho' there be several prudential considerations which may render it proper to extend favour to those whose tenets, or temper, or both, show that they but ill deserve it, no consideration can give the magistrate a right to persecute any party whose principles, viewed in a political light,

are nowise unfriendly to the rights of their fellow-citizens, or of the state, and whose disposition and conduct is peaceable and inoffensive.

Now to apply the principles above laid down to the case in hand; what shall we say of the tenets of papists in regard to the secular powers? Are they, or are they not friendly to civil government in general, or to the present government of this island in particular? As to the first of these questions, all papists, it must be owned, acknowledge a certain obedience to be due to a foreign and independent power, the Pope. And tho' this, by some of them (for they are not unanimous) is said to be only in spirituals, yet in matters of jurisdiction, it has never been possible to ascertain the precise boundary between spirituals and temporals. Nor can it be denied, that in doubtful cases, superstition inclines strongly to favour the claims of the former. This, if it should be an error, the superstitious always consider as the safer error of the two. And in regard to the second question, they were doubtless, till of late, in this part of the island, generally disaffected to the present royal family. Nor could any person wonder that it was so, considering the cause of the abdication of James VII. grandfather to the pretender.

As to the aspect which their tenets bear to civil society (for it is neither in a religious nor in a moral view, but solely in a political, that I am here considering them) it must be acknowledged that to social union their principles are nowise adverse. Witness those kingdoms and states in Europe, where the whole, or the greater part, of the people are popish. It has been remarked, however, that the Romish religion is not equally favourable to a free government as the protestant. But though there be something like a servility of spirit in implicit faith, or the belief of infallibility in any human tribunal, which is more congenial to political slavery, it cannot be said that the former is incompatible with civil freedom. This country, as well as others, was free, even when Roman Catholic; and it would not be just to deny that there have been of that communion, eminent patrons of the liberties of the people.

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As to the aspect with which the party in general, (I speak not of individuals) eyes other sects, it is certainly very unfavourable. Her doctrine concerning the spiritual state, both here and hereafter, of all who dare dispute her decisions, whom she denominates heretics and schismatics, does not tend to cherish affection towards them. In this, however, she is not singular. The case is the same with all fanatical sects. But, as temper is not formed entirely by principle, but is often as much the result of habit and accidental circumstances, there are great differences in this respect in different places. In those popish countries where they have none of any different sect living among them, and little occasion to know any thing of such but by the representations of their priests, it cannot be doubted, that the people put protestants almost in the same class with demons. They consider them as a sort of devils incarnate. I must acknowledge, that in those protestant countries, or those parts of protestant countries where they have no papists, and consequently know nothing of them but by hearsay, their judgment is equally unfavourable. But in those nations which have long enjoyed the blessings of peace and toleration, where protestants and papists live together, as in Holland, where both are protected, and neither is allowed to injure the other, they come soon to consider each other as human creatures and brethren, and to contract mutual friendships and intimacies, scarcely minding the difference of religious sentiments. And even in this country, it is notorious, that in those parts where papists are least known, they are most hated and dreaded. There is nothing which more strongly recommends toleration to a benevolent heart, than that it has a powerful tendency to humanize the tempers of the most opposite sects, and conciliate them to a friendly intercourse of good offices to one another. This serves to lay the mind open to conviction, by removing gently and gradually, those rooted prejudices which are the greatest obstruction to it.

Upon the whole, the question comes to this, whether so inconsiderable a party (for both in number of people and in property, their proportion is so very small as not to be

worth mentioning) of such a character as is above delineated (and I have endeavoured to do it with the utmost impartiality, neither exaggerating nor extenuating their faults) can be of any danger to the constitution of this country? It ought always to be taken into consideration, that it is not proposed that they be admitted into any, even the lowest offices of magistracy or legislation, or any place of public trust. It ought also to be remembered, that if at any time any unforeseen evil or danger should arise from that quarter, the legislature, of which they can make no part, and on which, considering their very great inferiority in all respects, they can have no conceivable influence, have it always in their power to give a timely check to it.

In regard to the malign aspect of popery towards sectaries, as she calls them, whom doubtless she considers as rebellious children; has not experience in this and other countries, fully evinced, that even papists can be softened by good usage; that lenity and toleration deaden the asperity which the bare name of heretic (till they become familiarized to their persons) raises in their minds; And as to the disaffection of which they are suspected to the reigning family, why should we judge more harshly of them on this head, than of those protestants amongst us much more numerous, who have been known formerly to have the same attachments to the Stuart-family with them? I do not speak thus to raise an odium against any party. I would be the last man in Britain to attempt it. Besides, it is evident to every one who reflects, that we can have nothing to fear from our nonjurors, a party which has been sensibly declining for many years past. I only mention them for the sake of observing that if we admit that many families, once in that way, have, within these last thirty years, changed their political creed, it does not seem reasonable to suspect, that many papists, in the same time, may not have changed theirs.

In some respects the change is less to papists than to them. The divine right of monarchical government on the patriarchal plan, as it is called, and consequently the indefeasible, hereditary right of the abdicated family to the crown of these realms, is no principle of popery. The attachment

attachment of papists was a personal attachment, or at most a consequence of their attachment to the cause for which that family suffered. But in regard to forms of government, or particular governours, their religion leaves them at full liberty. A papist may be a republican, or a friend to monarchy, absolute or limited. In these matters he is noway confined by his religion. And that he should change in an attachment not founded in principle, is nothing extraordinary. He may be convinced that prescription takes place in government, and, for the peace of society, ought to take place, as well as in other matters; that, without admitting this principle, there would be few or no legal rulers now existing in the world, as most sovereignties may be traced backwards to manifest usurpation. Whatever judgment therefore he may form of the revolution, there is no inconsistency in his being a loyal subject to the present royal family. And in regard to such as shall take the oath prescribed by the act of parliament for England, or the like oath proposed for papists here, I shall only say that it would be extremely uncharitable to suppose them all perjured.

But as some things have been plausibly urged against the credibility of their oaths, it may be worth while to bestow, on this point, a little more attention. It is said, 'The dispensing power of the pope, his infallibility, the principle that no faith is to be kept with heretics, all serve to invalidate their promises and oaths, especially when given to those whom they regard as heretics.' That the popes have claimed such a dispensing power in loosing the obligation of the most solemn vows and contracts, and that many people have been blind enough to credit this most arrogant and impious claim, it would be to give the lie to all history, even the most authentic, to deny. Such also is the power they have claimed and exercised of deposing kings and emperors, and of loosing their subjects from their allegiance. Such also are their pretensions to infallibility, their corrupt maxims subversive of faith given to heretics, in all which they have been supported by hireling and prostitute writers among the clergy, friars, canonists, and expectants of preferment

preferment in the church. But to say thus much is one thing, and to say that these points are received universally as doctrines of the church, is another. We ought to be just even to enemies.

In regard to the last of the above maxims, that faith is not to be kept to heretics, tho' it was never asserted, in so many words, by any council, it is unquestionable, that the council of Constance, came so near giving it their sanction, in the decree they pronounced for the ease of the emperor's conscience, whom they had seduced to act a most perfidious part, as well as in the whole of their infamous proceedings with regard to Huss, that tho' it cannot be called an established principle of their religion, it has received that countenance from the spiritual powers among them, which furnishes but too good a handle for the clamours and jealousies of protestants. And I will acknowledge in passing, that as I could put no confidence, where religion is concerned, in the faith of a man who would vindicate a procedure so subversive of that security in engagements which is the most essential bond of society, so I can never consider that man as dangerous, who, in this age and country, has the egregious folly to attempt the vindication. But in general, when recourse is had to experience, I am satisfied, there is no ground to consider it as a maxim, so prevalent in that party, as to destroy all faith in their promises. If its prevalence were so great, what hindered them in England, from taking the oath of supremacy, or the formula in Scotland? These would have secured them against many inconveniences to which their religion exposed them. And if there be some instances of their swearing falsely, from the temptation of interest, can we say that perjury is absolutely unexampled amongst ourselves? It is well known that in England, papists had it in their power to relieve themselves, by means of certain oaths, before the passing of the late act. But those oaths were different from that now enacted. Now a man who thinks he may take oaths, and be under no obligation, or who thinks he has it in his power to obtain a dispensation from that obligation, has no reason to make any distinction between one oath and another. The dispensing power

power serves equally for all. Now that those in England, who, on no consideration, could be induced to take the oaths formerly required, do not hesitate to take that required by the late act, is evidence sufficient to a reasonable person, that they consider this as what they may, with a good conscience, take, but not the former.

‘ But how is it possible,’ some will object, ‘ that they can conscientiously abjure so many high prerogatives of the sovereign pontif, the successor of Saint Peter, and vicar of Jesus Christ? Such are his dispensing power, his supremacy in temporals, and his infallibility; since it is unquestionable that these prerogatives he has both claimed, and pretended to exercise?’ To this I can only answer, that it is a known fact, that Roman Catholics themselves are not unanimous in regard to the justice of those claims. For example, it is a tenet universally held by them, that the church is infallible. But in the explanation of this tenet they differ exceedingly, as well as in the directions they give where we ought to seek for her unerring oracles. Some send us to the pope, with whom alone, according to them, this amazing privilege is lodged; some to the pope and ecumenical council acting in conjunction; some to the council tho’ without the pope; some to the church universal, that is, to whatever opinions universally obtain in those they term catholic countries.

So notorious it is, that even among papists there are that are more, and there are that are less, papistical. Accordingly some even of their writers denominate those *Pontificii* papists, by way of distinction, who defend all the exorbitant claims of the papacy. Nay so certain it is that the Romanists themselves are greatly divided on this head, that the famous council of Constance above referred to, as well as the council of Pisa that preceded it, asserted its own superiority above the pope in the most express terms, and indeed acted in an entire conformity to this doctrine *. It

* I cannot help observing here a ridiculous blunder in the writers of the *Short View*, &c. Rem. ii. Speaking of the condemnation of Huss, they add, “ to the everlasting disgrace of “ an infallible pope,” &c. They have certainly derived all their

is not just, therefore, (for our religion does not permit us to speak deceitfully even for God)† to talk of the pope's infallibility, dispensing power in respect of oaths, and the lawfulness of perjury to heretics, as doctrines universally received in the church of Rome. These, and several other such absurdities, will be found, from a proper attention to ecclesiastical history, to have ebbed and flowed, in that church, with knowledge and ignorance. In proportion as knowledge increased, those opinions lost credit; as ignorance increased, they gained credit. Whatever influence authority may have on weak minds, in making speculative dogmas, however nonsensical, be received with veneration, there is a principle in human nature, which, till the mind is wholly immersed in superstition and darkness, will effectually prevent such moral absurdities from being generally assented to. Nay, a principle of honour, as well as a sense

knowledge of that affair from Dr W. A. D's letter to Mr G. H. This should prove a caveat to those who pick up their information in this manner, not to venture a single step beyond their authority. That council acknowledged no pope, at the time that Huss was condemned. P. John xxiii. who called them together, they deposed, on an accusation of the most shocking crimes, concerning which I shall only observe, that *heresy* and *schism* were in the number. Of the other two pretenders to the popedom, (for there had been no fewer than three ever since the council of Pisa) neither of whom they acknowledged, Gregory xii. resigned, and Benedict xiii. they afterwards deposed, and then proceeded to the election of Martin v. The council of Constance are justly chargeable with many things atrocious and tyrannical. But of the acknowledgement of the pope's infallibility they are entirely guiltless. The blunders of these writers in reasoning are not less remarkable than their misrepresentations of fact, and misapplications of scripture. Let it serve as one out of many instances their extraordinary mode of arguing about oaths. An oath, say they, Rem. iv. renouncing certain principles, implies that they were the man's principles before; and as an oath alters not one's principles, they are his principles still. By this wonderful method, if a man take the oath of allegiance, he cannot give surer evidence that he is disloyal, and his taking the abjuration demonstrates him a Jacobite.

sense of right; go far to check the progress of those disgraceful maxims.

I shall only add to the above remarks, that even in regard to those whose conformity to the civil establishment may not be so cordial as could be wished (for that there may be some such instances who can deny?) it will still have this good effect viewed in a political light, that it will be a check both on their actions and on their conversation. Principles openly and solemnly abjured; it may be supposed that men, especially those of a sacred character, will, for their own sakes, not be forward to avow, and still less to inculcate. There is therefore here a real accession of strength to the civil establishment, without the smallest prejudice that I can perceive to the protestant interest.

But the incompetency even of the British parliament for making such a change in the laws wherein religion is concerned, has been boldly asserted. The establishment of the present presbyterian church of Scotland was declared January 1707, a fundamental article of the union of the two kingdoms, not to be altered afterwards even by the joint legislature of both. In the act declaring this, there is a clause perpetually confirming the 5th act parl. 1690, which was the act establishing presbytery, and ratifying the confession of faith. In this there is a general ratification of all former acts made against popery. But the acts now proposed to be in part repealed, could never be comprehended in that clause, because they were not former but posterior acts. The writers of the *Short View** argue in a way entirely their own. "The acts," say they, "directly relating to this one, and consequently ratified with it, and unalterably established are chiefly three, "act 2d parl. 1700, act 3d, 1702, act 2d, 1703." Now that these acts are related to act 5th, 1690, as they all relate to religion, nobody will dispute; but that they were ratified by an act ten or twelve years before they were made, these gentlemen have the whole honour of discovering. Let it be observed that these acts, tho' posterior to the act 1690, were prior to the act 1707. Yet this act for the

* Rem. i.

security of religion at the union, passes over those more recent acts in relation to popery, and only declares perpetual an act made so many years before them, thereby plainly leaving the intermediate acts to the wisdom of the British legislature, to confirm, repeal, or alter at any time, as they should find expedient, and only giving perpetuity to the act that first, after the Revolution, established the presbyterian form of government, and ratified the confession of faith. This argument (shall I call it?) by which these writers say modestly, their "argument is surely proved to be a demonstration" I have been the more particular in exposing, because in a certain event it is capable of being made a very bad use of among the people.

' But whatever be in the competency of parliament, must not the proposed repeal be highly prejudicial to the protestant interest?' say those who consider themselves as the patrons and friends of that interest, 'Will it not throw down all our fences, open the door to Jesuits, seminary priests, &c. and give liberty to the open profession and exercise of Romish idolatries, as well as give full scope to their vile artifices for the perversion of our youth?' All this appears specious to those who do not reflect, and consider things severally and attentively. First, they may profess their religion openly and safely. Be it so. I cannot see how that circumstance alone can contribute to their encrease. The quakers (a most harmless race) have long enjoyed that privilege; yet it does not appear that they have been encreasing. I think the contrary has been the fact. But if one were to devise a method for giving consequence to those of that way, and producing a change favourable to their increase, he could not devise a better than to get all those laws against papists enacted against quakers, especially if, by high premiums, wretches were bribed to turn informers, and contribute to the execution of the laws.

The bulk of mankind are more influenced by their passions, in forming their opinions, than by reason. Render people objects of our compassion, bring us once heartily to sympathize with them as with persons oppressed, not for
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any crime, but for what they cannot remedy, their opinions, and ye have done a great deal to make us turn proselytes and go over to those whom we cannot help pitying as persons suffering under the greatest cruelty and injustice. If the sufferers should display some patience and fortitude, they will need no stronger arguments to persuade spectators more remarkable for sensibility of heart than acuteness of understanding, that they must have truth upon their side. They will reverence them as saints. Wo to that nation, whose laws every sensible and honest heart must be convinced there is greater virtue in disobeying than in obeying! This is the case with persecuting laws, tho' the persecutors should have truth upon their side. If men, thro' fear of the punishments ye enact, belie their conscience, and in so doing sin against God, abjure what they believe, and profess what they think damnable errors, ye compel them to destroy their peace of mind, make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. They sin heinously; for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And ye legislators and judges, authors, promoters, and executors of such iniquitous laws, ye who ought to be the terror of evildoers and the praise of them that do well, ye are their tempters, seducers, and corruptors. The generality of men have a feeling of this, tho' they cannot reason upon it or explain it, and such a feeling has great influence among the people.

The only way I know of preventing this, is by steeling the heart against all compassion, resolving steadily to persist, and stick at nothing, till the end is attained. "There is nothing so ridiculous," says a late writer*, "in respect of policy as a moderate and half-way persecution. It only frets the sore, it raises the ill humour of mankind, excites the keener spirits, moves indignation in beholders, and sows the very seeds of schism in mens bosoms. A resolute and bold-faced persecution, leaves no time or scope for these engendering distempers, or gathering ill humours. It does the work at once, by extirpation, banishment, or massacre." It is indeed

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* Charact. Mis. 2 Ch. 3.

a fact well authenticated by history and experience, that persecution can never do service to a cause, unless it be carried the utmost length possible, as in Spain and Portugal. Now if such a thing were practicable in this country (as blessed be God, it is not) will any protestant stand forth and say it would be desirable?

Yet that any thing less does unspeakable hurt to the cause it was meant to serve, might, if necessary, be verified by a cloud of witnesses, such as the first planting of christianity, the reformation both abroad and at home. I shall however at this time go no farther for evidence than to what happened in this country in the last century. When the episcopal form of church government, was established at the Restoration, if our civil and ecclesiastic rulers had had any share of moderation, prudence, or common humanity, the minds of men would, without great difficulty, have been pretty generally conciliated to the establishment then made, as neither in doctrine nor in form of worship (for they used no liturgy) could the difference be called material. But the spirits of our governours at that time were such as would bear no contradiction, and brook no delay. Their immediate recourse was to penal statutes, the first thing always thought of by men of strong passions, but weak judgment. Statutes were accordingly enacted, breathing vengeance against all who would not conform in every thing to the ecclesiastical model that had been erected. They too pleaded the right of retaliating. And it would be doing them great injustice to deny, that the conduct of those who had preceded them, had, on this head, supplied them with plenty of matter. A persecution accordingly was commenced, and furiously carried on. Numbers of unhappy men (infatuated, as some would call them) who never meant to be criminal, but who could not be brought to think it their duty to profess, thro' fear of human punishment, what they did not believe, were daily sacrificed to the rage of their still more infatuated rulers. What was the consequence? Did they, by these means, stop the progress of schism, as they called it, and effect the so much desired uniformity? Quite the reverse. The tyranny
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of the ruling powers alienated the minds of the people; inſomuch that at the Revolution, wherever the perſecution had been hotteſt, the friends of preſbytery were the moſt numerous: On the contrary, in thoſe parts, where the people had been bleſſed with paſtors and rulers that were men of moderation and of a chriſtian ſpirit, there was a very general conformity to the eſta bliſhed model.

But it will be replied, ' We do not ſeek to perſecute; ' we deſire only that things may continue as they are. ' Papiſts were not perſecuted before the propoſed repeal; ' and we do not ſee why they ſhould aſk any indulgence ' beſide what was ſo generally granted them.' Is it not evident that the indulgence they had was meerly by connivance? It was no legal toleration. And is it agreeable to any body to remain on ſo precarious a foot, and at the mercy of every body? It muſt be owned that the law was rarely executed, in conſequence of the temper of the times, and the lenity of our government. Yet there are ſome inſtances of its having been executed. And what was the reaſon that it was not oftener? It was the conviction which men have, when their minds are not inflamed by fanatic zeal, that the law was too ſevere, and, when ſelf-defence does not render it abſolutely neceſſary (which God be thanked, is not our caſe,) not reconcilable with the principles either of humanity or of juſtice (it was, I ſay, this conviction) that prevented its execution. Nay, ſo ſtrongly do men ſeem to be perſuaded of its injuſtice, that many who are againſt the repeal, declare ſolemnly, that they would never give information againſt a papiſt, or take any concern in the execution of that law. Now if it was a juſt and neceſſary law; why ſtartle at the execution which ought to be eſteemed a public ſervice? Why were not papiſts, not for any wilful or intended crime, but for what, thro' the miſfortune of their education (which might have been our own caſe) they believed in their conſcience to be their duty; why were they not informed on, dragged before the magiſtrate, ſtript of their property, driven naked from their families and homes, baniſhed into foreign countries to beg or ſhift for bread, it may be in their old age, among ſtrangers, the beſt way they

they could; and if they returned, why were they not hanged without mercy? for this, we are told coolly, is unavoidable*, to make the law effectual. But if acting thus would be unjust, why suffer a law to remain in force, which, if it answer no other purpose, will at least answer this bad purpose of being a reproach on the nation, and a severe retort against every protestant, who in arguing with a papist, urges the different spirit of the two religions?

‘But just or unjust,’ say some, ‘it is better to have it as a rod over their heads.’ That is, in other words, ‘Tho’ we have no mind to do injustice at present, we wish to have it in our power to be unjust with impunity, when we please, nay to bribe others to be villains (for the law gives a high reward to informers) that those who have no religion at all, no sense of virtue or honour, who neither fear God nor regard man, may be tempted by avarice.’ Is this a law becoming a christian nation? Is it such as it would become the ministers of religion to interpose for either preserving or enforcing? “Wo to him,” saith the prophet†, “that establisheth a city by iniquity.” And shall the city of God itself, his church, his cause, the cause of truth and purity, be established by such accursed means? Are we protestants? And do we say, “Let us do evil that good may come?” Yet of such the apostle tells us‡, that their “damnation is just.” I have ever been taught, as a christian principle, and a protestant principle, that a good cause ought to be promoted by lawful means only; and that it was in the true spirit of popery, to think that the end would justify the means. We are now adopting all their maxims, and making them our own. We seem resolved that we shall have nothing on this head to reproach papists with. A great outcry has been raised of late about the progress of popery. I join in the complaint. I see her progress where I least expected it, and I lament it heartily, the more especially as she comes in *so questionable a shape*. If we must have popery, I would, above all things,

* Short View. Note on the extracts from K. William’s act.

† Hab. ii. 12.

‡ Rom. iii. 8.

things, have her retain her own likeness. The devil is never so dangerous, as when he transforms himself into an angel of light.

Besides, how grossly impolitic, as well as unjust, is the proposed opposition? If we have any regard to our protestant brethren in popish countries, shall we furnish the ruling powers there, with a plausible pretext for persecuting them? 'See,' say they, referring to the presbyterian church of Scotland, 'in what manner we should be treated, if these our countrymen of the same principles with them should ever arrive at power.' This, we all know, is the common way of arguing. It is far from being a just way; for a concurrence in doctrine does not necessarily imply a concurrence in the methods to be employed in defending it. But we need the less wonder, that others should argue thus, when we argue thus ourselves. The papists in Paris about two hundred years ago massacred the Parisian protestants; and the papists in Ireland acted the like tragedy in the last century on Irish protestants; therefore we are entitled to punish for these execrable deeds the papists of the present age in this country, however guiltless of these murders, however harmless in their life and conduct we have hitherto found them; tho' we can charge them with no crime, but that they are papists. It is said to have been a law amongst our clans in ages of barbarity, that when a person belonging to one clan, murdered a man belonging to another, the murderer, if found, was to be hanged as he deserved; but if he could not be found, the first man of the same clan that could be found, should be hanged in his stead. There is such a similarity in this to the mode of retaliation on sects, that both must certainly have sprung from the same source, the same original code of natural right!

But whencesoever this principle has arisen, it is certainly but too prevalent in most religious sects. And if we resolve to act upon it, we do what we can, to establish persecution every where, to the end of the world. We plead, that we persecute papists, because they persecute us; and they plead that they persecute us, because we persecute them.

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Our conduct will at this time be the more unjustifiable, because not only in protestant countries, but even in some popish countries, the ruling powers are greatly relaxing in this respect. Shall we then give a check to their humanity, by teaching them, from our example, to account our brother-protestants a more pernicious and dangerous race than they formerly imagined them to be?

God forbid that I should put on a foot of equality the disposition of any in this country, with that of inquisitors and crusaders. I will not allow myself to think so badly even of the most violent. But I cannot avoid observing, that when once we are in this train with any adverse sect, it is impossible to say how far we may think ourselves obliged to go. The same plea of necessity to render former measures effectual, may carry us such lengths as in the beginning we should have looked on with horror.

But to return; the repeal can never do hurt, because it is the repeal of a statute, which seems, even in the judgment of our antagonists on this question, to have done no good. So far from occasioning the decrease of the number of papists, they have been, we are told, encreasing for many years backwards. And this perhaps is the first instance in which the inefficacy of a law has been used as an argument against the repeal of it. That act, tho' severe, is not severe enough to extirpate papists; at the same time it is much too severe, considering the sentiments and manners of the times, for any but persons of no character, to assist in executing it. Thus it gives papists all the advantage of a plausible plea of suffering persecution, without being materially hurt by actual persecution. In some other countries, where Romanists, tho' not of the establishment, have enjoyed for centuries a legal toleration, we do not hear of any clamours about their encrease, or of any dread of danger arising from them. Why then should not this nation, since we have so strong evidence that severity will not answer, be induced to make the experiment of what may be effected by the more humane and more christian-like policy of other nations? In many instances, as has been

been observed by the best writers on jurisprudence, the unconscionable severity of laws has rendered them useless, nay made them serve to promote, instead of checking, the growth of those evils against which they are pointed. They make those very persons screen offenders, who would otherwise assist in convicting them. So much in regard to the justice and expediency of the measure in general.

I shall now take the freedom to consider a little, with all respect to my ecclesiastical superiors, the propriety of their interfering in this business. I have no right to lay down rules. But as a brother and fellow-minister, I offer my opinion on a case in which the cause of religion in general, and the character of ministers of the gospel in particular, are concerned. I have not the remotest wish, that any regard may be paid to my judgment, further than is due to the reasons by which it is supported. It was observed before, that the question of the expediency on danger of the measure, in respect of the public, is not properly of the department of our judicatories. The only question that can strictly be said to come under their cognizance as church courts, is that discussed in the former chapter, whether the toleration, or the persecution of such people, be most conformable to the spirit and laws of our holy religion. There are extraordinary cases in which, I acknowledge, it may be pardonable, perhaps commendable, in the pastors to step aside a little, for the sake of doing some signal service whereby the cause they are engaged in, may be advanced, and the honour of the master whom they serve, promoted. Let us see whether an application from the representative of this church, of the kind that was proposed at the last meeting of the General Assembly, and will, in all probability, be again moved at the ensuing, would answer these important ends. Waving the arguments already used, and which to me appear unanswerable, I shall only here advert to two things, first, to what suits the ministerial character to do; and secondly, to what will probably be the consequences of the measure proposed in the last assembly, if it shall now be adopted.

In regard to the former, it is the observation of an ingenious modern, that the magistrate and the pastor, are both denominated God's ministers, but in very different senses. The magistrate is the minister of divine justice, the pastor is the minister of divine goodness and grace. A most just and pertinent observation. The former accordingly beareth not the sword in vain; the latter cometh announcing peace thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. The service he is engaged in, is styled the ministry of reconciliation. The former operates chiefly by fear, being the terror of evil-doers; the latter chiefly by love, in the display he makes of the tender mercies of God and the love of Jesus. There is a beauty in preserving consistency of character, and, on the contrary, there is something singularly shocking to men whose taste is not totally depraved, in a gross violation of character. Sanguinary measures are, on certain occasions, very suitable in the officer of justice; but it ill becomes the messenger of peace to breathe out, like Saul the pharisee (unconverted indeed, but not the less zealous) threatnings and slaughter. The sense of what became a minister of the New Covenant, a preacher of good will to men, was so strong on the minds of the primitive christians, that when our religion came first into favour with the magistrate, it was looked on universally as a becoming action in the ministers to use their good offices in behalf of an unhappy creature who had exposed himself to the stroke of public justice, wherever any favourable circumstances could be pleaded in extenuation of his crime. But in no case whatever was it thought suitable that he should interpose to call for vengeance. That the servant of the prince of peace should prove a peacemaker, mediator, and intercessor, was entirely consonant to the nature of his office, but that he should interpose as an avenger, or as an instigator of others to vengeance, or to violent and vindictive measures, was considered as a practical denial of the Lord that bought him, who came not to destroy mens lives, but to save them; and as what suited more the character of that being whom they called the adversary and accuser of the brethren.

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If, by some means or other, our legislature had been incited to think of imposing new restraints, or inflicting new pains and penalties on papists, or on dissenters of any denomination, it would have been excusable, nay, on account of the motive, might have been thought praiseworthy in the ministers of religion, to represent with all due respect, that they hoped, by the use of arms more evangelical, the end might be attained, and the public sufficiently secured from danger. But the interposition proposed at present is of a very different kind. To what shall I compare it? A culprit more unfortunate than criminal stands before his judge. The sword is unsheathed and ready to strike. Several humane persons intercede, mention every alleviating circumstance, propose taking security of the convict that he shall behave himself properly, and beg that the sword may again be sheathed. The magistrate relents, and is on the point of complying, when a person of a grave aspect interposes, who, tho' he carry the olive-branch, the ensign of peace, in his hand, with a countenance more stern than meek, to the surprize of every body, cries to the officer of justice, What are you going to do? No security can bind that wretch; and nowhere can the sword of justice be sheathed at this time so properly as in his bowels. This parable I leave to the reflections of my readers.

I shall add a few words on the consequences of the application. I admit that, if made, it will possibly be successful, not from any conviction of the propriety of making it, or of the fitness of what is asked. But a flame, little to our credit, has been raised in the country, and it may be thought that yielding to the humour, however reprehensible, and granting what is asked, is a less evil, than a positive refusal might prove, especially considering the state of public affairs at present. But the question of greatest moment is, In what light will the application represent the spirit of our people in general, and this national church in particular, to the constituent branches of the British senate? It should be remembered how different the fate of the like bill was in England, and even in Ire-

land, where that sect, with some colour of reason might have been accounted dangerous. But here! where comparatively they are so inconsiderable both in number and property,—I could say a great deal, but I forbear. I will not dissemble. I am both ashamed and grieved, that there should be occasion to say any thing on such a subject.

In what light will our conduct appear, when contrasted with that of the English and Irish bishops, whom it would be absurd as well as uncharitable to accuse of indifference in such a cause, and who, as members of the legislature, readily concurred in granting the relief desired in their countries? Is it possible that any of us are simple enough to imagine that, with judicious persons, the comparison will redound to our honour?

Yet amid so many grounds of mortification, I am happy to have it in my power to say, that in the last assembly, a most respectable assembly, and far the most numerous I ever witnessed, (and I have witnessed many) a motion for an application of this nature was thrown out as altogether improper and unbecoming, by a very great plurality of voices. It ought also to be attended to, that this happened when men had nothing to influence their judgment but the merits of the question, not a single person that I know of, having had the least knowledge of such a motion till it was made in the house. Tumultuous conventions and mobs and other lawless excesses had not then been artfully produced to terrify those who could not be convinced. I had never before so distinct an idea of what is called in ecclesiastic history preaching a crusade; at the same time I must regret that I should ever have acquired additional knowledge on this subject, from any thing to be seen in this protestant land.

I beg it may also be observed that popery is not the only adversary we have to struggle with. I do not speak of the opposition we are exposed to from other sects much more numerous. I speak of the infidelity, the scepticism, the open profaneness, and contempt of all religion that so much abound in this age and country, a far more formidable foe than

than popery. Is it a matter of no consequence to us, how our conduct may affect this evil, either by adding strength to it, and furnishing libertines with new arguments, for fortifying themselves in their impiety, or by acting such a part, as must tend to silence and confute them? It is well known that persons of this stamp are the declared enemies of our order. Let us try to draw instruction from the reproaches, and even the aspersions of our enemies. Amongst other things, they arraign all clergymen of whatever sect, for a pride which takes fire at the least contradiction, for an ambition or lust of power, which makes all rivalry insupportable, and as the natural consequence of these, for a persecuting spirit, which all possess against the common enemy, and every single sect possesses against every other. The common maxim of these men is, "Priests of all religions are the same." That the character which they draw, is done with much exaggeration and malevolence, no impartial person will deny. Nor will it be denied by such, on the other hand, that the unamiable spirit too often displayed by those who ought to have been not only defenders, but patterns of religion, has given too great scope for such accusations.

It was lately proposed in Sweden, a Lutheran, and therefore a protestant country, to give a toleration to all dissenters. This measure would have chiefly affected Calvinists, and next to them, if I mistake not, Papists. The clergy opposed it. But as the other estates of the kingdom approved the measure, it took place. Should we now, like the Swedish clergy interpose, in order to frustrate the gracious intentions of the legislature, would it not contribute to confirm the irreligious in their errors? Could we be surpris'd that they should exclaim in triumph, 'It is precisely as we thought. They are all the same thing at bottom; Papist, Lutheran, Calvinist, &c. &c. Their differences consist in a few trifling ceremonies, or unintelligible logomachies, but the same spirit pervades the whole, the same pride, the same intolerance, the same inclination to domineer, and to crush all that oppose them?'

‘ them?’ I know it will be said, ‘ What have we to do to mind the speeches of the profane and graceless? They neither do nor will favour us, whatever part we act.’ I imagine that even the profane and graceless ought not to be despaired of, and consequently that their sentiments and speeches ought not to be altogether disregarded. Such are not always irreclaimable. Much less ought we to furnish them with what may serve not only to confirm them in their pernicious course, but to prove the instruments of gaining over others to their party. The apostle Peter did not think the sentiments even of heathens were to be despised by the disciples, and therefore enjoined them to be careful that their conversation might be honest among the Gentiles, that they may be ashamed who falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ †. And the apostle Paul makes the opinion of infidels of so great consequence, that he expressly requires, that regard be had to it, even in the election of a bishop. “ He must have a good report of them which are without †.” Shall we then think it a matter of no moment, that we give occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme? Does it appear to us a thing absolutely indifferent, that the good ways of the Lord are, by our means, evil spoken of among them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is it all one whether fools be recovered by us, or confirmed in their folly?

I conclude with my most fervent prayers to the God of grace and father of mercies, that he would be pleased to direct the great council of our church, as on every occasion, so particularly on the present, that he would inspire them with the amiable spirit of their Master, with the wisdom that is from above, which is not like the wisdom of the worldling, earthly, sensual, devilish, but first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy; that we may all know by experience, that the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace.

† 1 Pet. ii. 12. iii. 16. † 1 Tim. iii. 7.



CHAPTER III.

The proper and christian Expedients for promoting religious Knowledge, and repressing Error.

IT requires but little art to make ignorance jealous. The multitude every where are ignorant, and, by consequence, easily inflamed with jealousy. It requires but few (sometimes a single person has been sufficient) of those in whom the populace confide, to suggest that there is danger, and they are instantly alarmed; they ask neither evidence nor explanation. As the flame spreads, its influence on every individual encreases. Each is actuated not only by the fervour originally excited in himself, but by that which is, as it were, reflected from every countenance around him. When the fury of the people, from a notion of gross injury, is worked up to a certain pitch, they are no longer capable of controul. They encourage one another by their number and rage. There is nothing which they do not think themselves able to effect. They run headlong into the most violent excesses. Whatever be the cause they contend for, they have not so much as an idea of any other expedients than such as are dictated by fury. It happens then almost invariably that they overshoot the aim of those who first raised the alarm, and awaked their jealousy. And when they interpose to restrain them, they generally find it impracticable. For the people then have no ears for any language but that of their passions. In vain are they reminded that more moderate methods were pointed out to them from the beginning. If the rabble are to be set to work, they must be allowed to go to work their own way. They have neither capacity nor patience for pursuing moderate methods.

For these reasons it would not be consonant to justice to charge the effects of the popular frenzy wholly on those
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who at first were active in alarming them. As little would it be, on the other hand, wholly to exculpate the first instigators. That they did not foresee the fires that would be kindled, and the destruction that would ensue, and were therefore not the intentional causes of the particular outrages, justice as well as charity require us to admit; but that any one who inflames the minds of the multitude, must be sensible, that he endangers the peace of his country, as well as the property and lives of his fellow-citizens, and therefore by all the principles of law, is responsible for the consequences, cannot be denied. And even on the principles of sound morality, he is so far answerable, as the consequences actually were, or might have been, foreseen by him. Nor is it easy in this case to find an apology for the heart, that is not at the expence of the understanding.

But we can say the less in behalf of those from whom the evil originated, because their more moderate methods are as really unjustifiable, on the maxims of the gospel, as the more violent methods of the multitude. The difference between them is not so much in kind as in degree. The introduction of force into the service of religion, whether applied by the magistrate, or by the mob, has ever proved, and will prove the bane of true religion. It is the establishment of the profession of religion on the ruins of its spirit. It is attempting to support christianity by undermining virtue. It presents the strongest temptations to what every one who reflects, whatever be his system of opinions, must admit to be the grossest crimes. It is one of the earliest corruptions of Antichristian Rome, the spiritual Babylon, and the source of most of her other abominations. I may add, it is a sure evidence, that we have not yet recovered from the intoxication occasioned by the envenomed cup of which she has made all nations drink, when we so entirely adopt her sentiments, and speak her language. Ill does it besit in particular the shepherds of Christ's flock to recur to such unsanctified expedients. To what expedients shall we then recur, when an im-

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'diate danger threatens?' To such only as are (if I may be allowed the expression) congenial to the service.

But let it be observed, that there is not always danger when the cry is raised. There is no more real danger here at present to protestantism from popery, than there was in England to episcopacy in Queen Anne's time, from protestant dissenters, when the like cry of the danger of the church, from a cause as trivial, excited such tumults throughout that nation, or than there was to christianity itself not thirty years ago from judaism, on occasion of the naturalization bill, or Jew-bill, which put all England in a ferment. The mode of arguing adopted at that time in England in regard to Jews, was remarkably similar to that now used in this country, in regard to papists. If Jews, it was said, were allowed but liberty, they would soon become possessed of power. If they were, in any case, permitted to acquire real, (or what we commonly call *heritable*) property, they would soon be proprietors of the whole kingdom; if entire freedom were given to their religious profession, judaism would soon become predominant; circumcision in less than a century would be established by act of parliament, and our churches would all be converted into synagogues. Then would commence the persecution of christians. And for this purpose crosses, not crucifixes, would be erected in every market town.

By I know not what infatuation, it happens almost every where, that the bulk of the people seem disposed to think, that if any sect, how insignificant soever, were to enjoy the same freedom in its religious profession with those of the establishment, tho' without any share of power, it would quickly be preferred by every body, and the established worship would be totally deserted. One would think that at bottom there lurked some apprehension, that the established model is of all religious professions the most unpopular in the country, or would soon become so, if any competitor were admitted; that consequently they imputed the preference given it by the people, solely to their ignorance, and were inclined to suspect, that on a fair examination, it would prove the most irrational and the most un-

scriptural. They act as tho' they thought, that without its legal prerogatives, particularly without the signal advantage of penal statutes, suppressing, or at least, checking other sects, it would not have so much as an existence. Now what is most extraordinary is, that the people who seem to be actuated by such unaccountable suspicions are not those who think most unfavourably of the establishment; on the contrary, they are commonly the greatest sticklers for its absolute perfection in every article. I do not accuse one national church, or one sect in particular, of this absurdity. It is pretty common to all: In this respect popery, prelacy, presbytery, are the same.

Now of all religious parties, the papists, to do them justice, are the most excusable in entertaining these suspicions. The reason is evident. No party can worse bear being brought to an open trial. Error, like vice, shuns the light. Virtue and truth, ought, on the contrary, to seek it. To the latter it is as beneficial, as it is fatal to the former. It was in the night, while men slept, in the decline of all useful knowledge, and the rapid advance of ignorance and barbarity, that the tares of popery were sown by the enemy among the wheat of the gospel, that good seed which had been sown by the Son of Man. What was nourished by ignorance, and could have been nourished by it only, must be hurt by knowledge. No wonder then that popery should dread enquiry, should admit no competition, should not give so much as a hearing to an adversary wherever she can avoid it. Reason is against her, scripture is against her, nay antiquity (which with those unversed in history, never with the knowing, she is fond to plead) is against her. What has she then to trust to, but the tyrant's iron rod? But for protestants to show the like illiberal suspiciousness is to betray their own cause, and sin against the majesty of truth. Truth requires but the light; because in regard to her, to be known is to be loved; error screens herself in darkness, being conscious, that in regard to her, to be seen is to be hated. It is the common sign of a bad cause to be suspicious of itself, and to avoid a fair inquiry. This is one of the many evil symptoms which strongly mark the cause of Rome.

But,

But, in order to a fair enquiry, some things are previously necessary. Such are the means of knowledge, and the means of support to those employed in conveying knowledge. In these days we have no ground to look for miraculous assistance. The church now arrived at maturity, is largely supplied with all necessary evidence within herself, and no longer needs those props and supports she was obliged to lean upon in her infant years. But the effects produced by those miracles still remain with us as evidences of the reality of the account, and the fulfilment of prophecies in regard to the progress, the most memorable events, the establishment and the defection of the church, which in the early days they could not have, amply supply to us the want of present miracles. If we use properly the spiritual weapons suited to this spiritual warfare, we shall have no reason to despair of success. That human means ought to be employed none but the merest enthusiasts will deny. Only let them be such human means as suit the cause of truth and charity.

If popery, as has been contended, has been, in some places, on the increase, it will be found, on enquiry, that it has been only where the people unhappily are far removed from the means of knowledge. The evil itself, which is ignorance, points out the cure. Introduce the light, and the darkness is dispelled. In large and extensive parishes in the Highlands, they often recur to popish teachers, because they have no other. Where there is gross ignorance, there are also no doubt barbarity and superstition. And wherever these are, the absurdities of popery are better suited to the taste of the people, than the doctrines of a more rational religion. Now that in parishes in the Highlands and western isles, some of sixteen, some of twenty five, some of thirty miles in length, and from five to seven in breadth, some containing near three thousand inhabitants, where they have but one protestant pastor, how can they escape being perverted to popery? This must appear a necessary consequence, when we consider the uncommon zeal which papists have always shown for making profelytes.

Now for redressing this grievance what is to be done?

I know only two methods, compulsion and persuasion. If we recur to the first, and after it, tho' by no means a christian method, the general hankering seems to be, what will our penal laws signify in those islands and tracts of land where the papists in number compared with the protestants, are already by the accounts that have been given *, as thirty to one in some places, in others as twenty, in others as ten? Or what end would it answer, tho' we should get laws ten times more severe than those in force at present? Can we imagine, that any person, however well inclined to the work, would be so mad as to attempt, in those districts, to execute the laws? Sanguinary statutes in such cases, do but show the impotence of the legislative power, and embolden people the more openly to set it at defiance. They will have this additional motive in a cause like this, that the more daring their transgression of our laws is, the greater will be their merit with their party, because done for the interest of the church. Can any person who reflects, be so infatuated as to think that in this way any service will be done to protestantism? That such fruitless attempts will do it great disservice, one must be totally blinded by his prejudices not to perceive. The minds of the people will more than ever be alienated from us, their numbers will strengthen their resolution, and their success will ensure their perseverance. To me it is manifest that in such parishes at least, the repeal proposed will be favourable to the other, and the only christian, method of persuasion, because it will be of great use to us for gaining their confidence, and bringing them without suspicion to join with us in other ordinary affairs. If we will not admit persons who offer themselves as friends and fellow-citizens, and accept such service from them for the defence of the state, as they think they can in a consistency with their duty give us, we in a manner force them to combine with one another, for their own defence, against us. We gain to ourselves, besides, all the odium of being persecutors, without gaining any thing to the cause. They will

* See the account published by the society for propagating christian knowledge in 1774.

will have all the advantage of the plea of being persecuted for conscience sake, without sustaining any loss by persecution. We arm their minds with prejudices against us, and deprive ourselves of the power of ever gaining on them by softer methods. In brief, if nothing will please but the antichristian plan of converting by the sword, and if we are now so unaccustomed to evangelical weapons that we should be utterly at a loss how to use them, we have no chance at all, on that plan, if we set about the work in a faint-hearted manner, and adopt the measures of Antichrist by halves. We shall but expose ourselves, and be found in the end to have done more ill than good.

‘ Well, if we are not to go faintly to work,’ it may be asked, ‘ what is the stout-hearted method you would propose ?’ I answer, What would the papists, our admired masters, in this motley spiritual temporal warfare, have done in the like case ? For tho’ in words we loudly condemn their conduct, we are ever recurring to their example for a pattern, and to serve as a justification of ourselves. I should rather ask, What did they when heretics were so numerous that penal laws could have no effect ? Their aim was then to subdue them by the sword. They instituted a crusade, and made war upon them as the enemies of Christ, This was their method with the Albigenes. Soldiers were enlisted in Christ’s name ; for those pretended servants would fight for him, in spite of himself. An army was accordingly sent to convince the heretics of their errors, after the military fashion, and convert them at the point of the sword. Those who were so obstinately unreasonable as not to be convinced by such weighty arguments, were butchered without mercy. Christ’s kingdom had, in their hands, totally changed its character. By his account, it was not proper for his servants to fight, unless his kingdom were, what it was not, a worldly kingdom. By their account, nothing was so proper. But the mystery is unravelled when we reflect that the kingdom they fought for, was in fact a worldly kingdom, misnamed Christ’s. Now if we are capable of adopting the like measures, and in order

order to grace the annals of Scotland for the eighteenth century, were to institute a protestant crusade, we are, I am afraid, but ill furnished (admitting we obtain all the assistance we can expect from the secular arm) with the means of executing such a plan. The pope is much better provided in resources for an undertaking of this sort. His soldiers, beside all temporal advantages, receive out of the church's inexhaustible treasury plenty of pardons and indulgences, and a sure passport to heaven, in case they should die in the cause. We have abandoned all pretensions to such trumpery, and, however convenient it might be for us, I question whether it would be in our power now to resume it.

There is no exaggeration or hyperbole, in what I say; I insist on it seriously, that if the popish and not the christian mode of conversion is to be adopted, there is not a step on this side the utter extirpation of those that will not yield, at which we can stop, without doing the cause of protestantism more injury than service. Now it is only in those highland parishes that I find any complaints of the encrease of popery. The smallest degree of attention to the above mentioned accounts published by the society, makes it evident that it has been occasioned neither by the want of penal laws, nor by a failure in the execution, for in both respects they were on the same footing with other parts of the country, but by the want of instruction. The places that we deserted, they occupied. Can we wonder at this? Would we have the people be atheists? If we will give them no religion, can we blame them for accepting one from those that are willing to give it? In the lowlands which are far more populous, where the parishes are much less extensive, and generally well supplied both in ministers and in schoolmasters, we find no reason for such complaints. In regard to people of rank, we have been rather gaining ground than losing it. The only places where there is immediate occasion for a check, are the Highlands and Western isles; and in these it is plain that any coercive methods which have yet been thought of, would prove to-

totally ineffectual. It would be impossible in that way to answer any valuable purpose, unless we were to proceed to such extremities, as I hope (notwithstanding the ugly appearances of late in some of our principal cities) we have not retained so much of the spirit of popery as to be able to think of.

If it is in vain then to recur to the weapons of Babylon, let us be induced to betake ourselves to the armoury of Christ. Had we but half the zeal that we may be christians ourselves, which we have that others may not be papists, there would be no occasion for arguments on this head. Nothing can be more manifest than that the great cause of the evil complained of, is the want of protestant teachers, both pastors and schoolmasters. And the principal causes of this deficiency are, the immoderate extent of parishes, and the want of livings. If a proper method could be devised for supplying this defect, if new erections were made from time to time where most needed, and the new erected parishes suitably supplied, there would be great ground to hope that, in process of time, a considerable change in respect of christian knowledge, might be effected. We shall be convinced of this truth, if we but reflect, that, in the highlands, popery and ignorance are always found to go together. And even where the measures proposed may have little effect at first, in surmounting prejudices, and producing conversions, it will not be without its use, in preventing further seductions.

But the great difficulty lies here, How are the teachers to be supported? Where are our funds? Great zeal has appeared of late for the protestant interest. In order to oppose any parliamentary relief to papists, money, I am told, has been contributed, and subscriptions given to a considerable amount. Some noted boroughs and corporations have even gone so far as to engage lawyers for opposing it in parliament. I should be happy to have it in my power to convince these people, of what is a most certain, and, in my judgment, a most evident truth, that the money thus contributed will be of real service to the cause
which

which they wish to promote, if given for raising a fund for supplying the highlands properly with teachers, of which there is still such manifest need. I appeal to those zealous persons themselves, if they can but reflect coolly on any thing, whether this be not, beyond all comparison, a more feasible way (and let me add, a more creditable way) of serving the cause of protestantism, than to throw money away on lawyers, in order to prevent the repeal of a law which, by their own confession, has not been of the smallest utility, for checking the evil complained of.

But it may be said, that tho' such an application of the money were agreed to by the contributors and subscribers, it would go but a short way, perhaps not farther than the endowment of a single parish, if even so far. This however would be something. But what I have yet mentioned is not the whole. There are many in the country, not only private persons but communities, who highly disapprove the proposed opposition to the repeal, who think it would be not only dishonourable, and unbecoming the cause of christianity, but even prejudicial, tho' attended with success, who nevertheless would gladly embrace an opportunity of contributing to advance the cause by christian methods, and of demonstrating to the world, that they are not (as they have been misrepresented by persons whose zeal far outstrips their judgment) people who care for none of these things. Let but an attempt of this kind be set on foot, and more perhaps will be given than is at present imagined.

It will be said, 'Was there not a collection made by order of Assembly, a few years ago, for the purpose now mentioned, which amounted to a very small matter? We have not great encouragement then to expect much in this way.' To this I reply, 1st. The generality of mankind are apt to be remiss and inattentive to things of this nature, till some remarkable event happen to rouse them. The alarms lately raised have supplied us with such an event. 2dly. The example of the liberality of those communities and individuals who had intended the same good end (tho' by means we think neither judicious nor justifiable) might
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it would be hoped, excite emulation in others who would chuse to show that they are not inferior in their ardour for the protestant cause, when its advancement is not pursued by Romish expedients. 3dly, It may not be improper, if it shall seem meet to the wisdom of our ecclesiastical superiors in the ensuing assembly, to recommend to synods or presbyteries to chuse fit persons both ministers and elders for receiving subscriptions from persons of rank and others within their respective jurisdictions, beside appointing a collection to be made in the parish-churches from the common people, and to recommend also to the Royal Boroughs, which are all represented in the Assembly, to obtain the aid of their respective corporations for a service that in every view should be admitted by protestants to be pious, charitable, and christian, in respect both of the end and of the means. Were a plan of this kind to be adopted, I should not doubt of our getting liberal assistance from many wealthy persons in England, from Scotchmen abroad, and even others well affected both to the protestant religion, and to the cause of liberty. The money collected ought doubtless to be entrusted to the management of the society in Scotland for propagating christian knowledge, whose known integrity and zeal, as well as their acquaintance with the state of the Highlands and western isles, render them of all persons the fittest for such a trust. I had the first suggestion of a scheme of this kind from a gentleman of this place, who thinks as I do, in regard to our late alarms; but who, if a method becoming christians and protestants, be agreed to, I have reasons to believe, will, as well as many others, contribute liberally. If measures of this kind should be adopted, I think it would not be a difficult matter to evince that the proposed repeal, instead of doing hurt, would be of service, in more ways than one. But to conclude,

Is there not at least some probability, that if this or something of the kind were done, a reformation in the highlands might in part be effected? But what do they themselves, that espouse measures of coercion, say, is to be expected in their way? I shall suppose, they succeed. The

act of King William about which the dispute arose, remains as it was. And what will the cause of protestantism gain thereby in the Highlands? Or what will the cause of popery lose? It would be easier to point out, on the other hand, what will be the probable loss of protestantism, and gain of popery. The measures pursued will prove a good handle for working up what at present is no more than a passive compliance with popery, as being the only religion that is rendered accessible to them, into an active zeal for the cause, and an implacable hatred of those whom they will be made to consider as not only their enemies, but the enemies of God. - And what effect the appearance of persecution may have, in places abounding with papists, on weak and ill instructed protestants, I will not say. For my part I acknowledge that my dislike to popery is so great, that I would never do it so much honour as to give it either martyrs or confessors to boast of. The method I propose has a direct tendency to remove the evil, without exasperating mens minds; and far from bringing a disgrace upon our church and nation, it will redound greatly to our honour.

Indeed I can conceive but one objection against it, which is, I own, as times are, a great one, namely, that it is a christian method. For, to say the truth, christian methods of conversion, are become so obsolete in christendom, that it looks rather romantic to propose them. This makes me fear much less that objection alone prove sufficient to defeat the project. We are very zealous without doubt, and so are the papists. And what does their zeal mostly, and ours too, amount to? Just to this, that we can be persuaded to do any thing for God's sake, except to love God and our neighbour. Of all tasks this is the hardest. For the sake of God men will divest themselves of humanity, and to advance their church, will sacrifice every remain of virtue, will even turn assassins and incendiaries. But how few in comparison can be persuaded, for God's sake, to make a sacrifice of their pride, of their revenge, of their malice, and other unruly passions? Who can be induced to be humble,

to be meek, to be humane, to be charitable, to be forgiving, and to adopt their master's rule of doing to others as they would that others should do to them?

Permit me then, my dear countrymen, fellow-christians, and fellow-protestants, to beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that ye would maturely weigh this most momentous business, and not suffer your minds by any means to be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Remember, Oh remember, that if ye would serve God indeed, ye must serve him in his own way. We show an absolute distrust in him, and a want of faith in the principles for which we pretend to be zealous, when we cannot restrain ourselves to those means only for the advancement of his cause, which are warranted by his word. God grant you understanding in all things.

THE END.

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